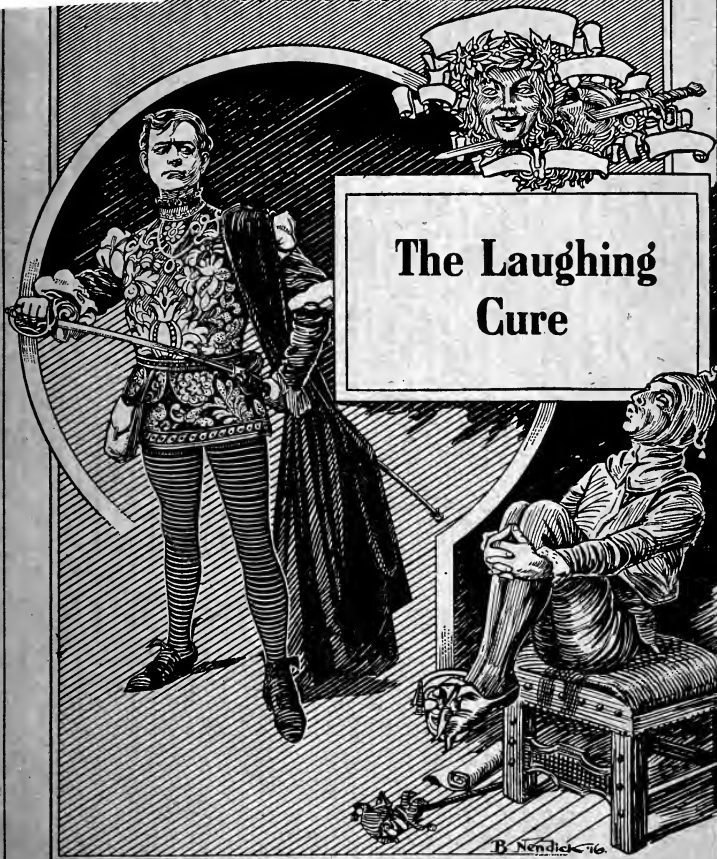


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THE LAUGHING CURE

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

BY

EDITH F. A. U. PAINTON

AUTHOR OF

*"As a Woman Thinketh," "A Burns Rebellion," "The Class Ship,"
"Clubbing a Husband," "The Graduate's Choice," "Hypnotizing
a Hypnotist," "A Prairie Rose," "Wanted: A Cook," "The
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DEDICATED TO

DR. GEORGE WASHINGTON CAREY

The "St. George" of many a modern dragon, and the
faithful friend of the author



CHICAGO

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY

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THE LAUGHING CURE

CHARACTERS.

DR. ST. GEORGE CAREY, *a Modern Invention*.....
.....*Who Turns the Trick*
JIMMIE MASON, *Mrs. Hanson's Brother*.....
.....*Who Knows His Sister*
DR. WHITCOMB.....*A Physician of the Old School*
CLARKE HANSON, *a Man of Business*.....
.....*Useful But Not Important*
LAURA HANSON, *His Wife*.....*With No Sense of Humor*
GAY HANSON, *His Sister*.....*Who Lives Up to Her Name*
KITTY CLYDE, *His Stenographer*.....
.....*Who Has an Eye for Jimmie*
MARY ELLEN PERRY, *a Neighbor*.....
.....*Of the Auntie Doleful School*
NORAH, *the Maid*.....*Who Catches the Fever*

TIME—*Today.*

PLACE—*Here.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*One Hundred Laughs—One a Minute.*

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I. The Hansons Depressed. Morning. The Diagnosis.
ACT II. The Hansons Obsessed. Afternoon. The Treatment.

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CHARACTERISTICS AND COSTUMES.

HANSON—Ordinary business man, up-to-date, but rusty, through too little recreation. Responds readily to the “laughing cure” and is a jolly, loving husband and a “good fellow” all around. About thirty-six. Business suit.

JIMMIE—Boyish, care-free boy, about twenty. Somewhat dudish in appearance. Very susceptible to the “girl” element, and sentimentally inclined.

WHITCOMB—Large, prosperous and dignified, not too “set” to resist the assault of his nephew’s modernity. Well dressed and somewhat imposing, upholding the “dignity of the profession” in his make-up throughout.

CAREY—An up-to-date student, decided, firm and sure of himself. A “jolly good fellow” at all times, meeting each on his own ground, but taking his philosophy very seriously, and with a sincere faith in his “glad gospel.” His serious speeches must be brought out very strong and impressively, in contrast to those of lighter vein. Well dressed but not flashily.

LAURA—Negligee, as befits an “invalid,” but very dainty and tasteful, as she must win the favor of the audience at once, in spite of her gloomy outlook. This is the hardest part in the play and needs much rehearsing. Her gradual conversion and “cure” must be carefully brought out. Her “practice” scenes, both with the doctor and alone, need very thorough preparation.

GAY—Tall and dark, tastefully dressed in home attire. Sweet and lovable, bubbling over with love of life.

KITTY—Small and blonde, in contrast to Gay; jolly and charming. Street costume in both acts.

NORAH—Housemaid’s cap and apron.

MRS. PERRY—Black costume throughout, ludicrous bonnet. Carries air of gloom. Must absolutely refuse to smile till the last line, when her conversion comes as a startling surprise to all. A death’s head throughout.

DR. CAREY'S MAXIMS.

Twelve to the Dozen.

1. "I can always trust a man who dares to laugh. It's the Lord-of-Heaven in him gushing forth."

2. "Smiling's good; to 'keep smiling' is better; but laughing's best. Stop smiling every half hour, long enough to laugh."

3. "Laughter re-creates what the Almighty has started to make out of us."

4. "A giggle is mere affectation in masquerade costume, donned with deliberate intent to deceive and mislead. An honest laugh never comes in disguise."

5. "Laughter, pure and unadulterated, is bottled life—pull the cork and it effervesces. It's more exhilarating than champagne, but never intoxicates."

6. "Life is a joke—a huge joke—whether it's on us or the other fellow; and when we can see it—well, then, it isn't on us."

7. "There's no drug in all the world's laboratories to equal in true remedial potency the magic quintessence of a spontaneous laugh."

8. "Instead of worrying because you can't find anything to worry about, laugh because you can't find anything to laugh about."

9. "There's no trouble of brain or body that a good, hearty laugh, if persistently taken according to directions, will not cure."

10. "The laughing microbe is the liveliest bug bacteriology knows. Talk about spreading. The pesky little germs are grandfathers in ten minutes, and every blessed one infects an area a mile square. They break out in the form of giggles, even to the third and fourth generation."

11. "Laughing—in big doses—is the best beauty dope on the market. Regularly applied, both internally and ex-

ternally, I guarantee it to remove every wrinkle from both brow and brain."

12. "Laughter is the vibration of angel voices coming down to us over the telephone wires that stretch from heaven to earth. It's the one magnetic line that connects us with eternal joy."

THE STORY.

Laura Hanson has had the misfortune to be born "without a sense of humor," much to the distress of herself and all about her. Her mental attitude leads to chronic dyspepsia, and her physician places the case with his nephew, St. George Carey, a fresh arrival from college, who prescribes "One laugh regularly every thirty minutes" as a sure cure for her trouble. Her difficulties in taking the "treatment" are gradually overcome and all the family assist in administering the dose according to directions. In the meantime Mr. Hanson, who has almost forgotten how to laugh, has confided to his clerks the method of treatment she is undergoing, and the story spreads throughout the town, until every man, woman and child is laughing with her, to the consternation of her doleful friend, Mrs. Perry, but the complete satisfaction of her own household and the physicians interested.

SYNOPSIS FOR PROGRAM.

ACT I—The Hansons are discouraged over the condition of Mrs. Hanson's health, and Jimmie expresses his disdain of her "lack of a sense of humor." "Methodist Episcopal Perry." Mrs. Perry comes to cheer Mrs. Hanson and prepare her for the end. Jimmie gives Dr. Carey a tip and the doctor prescribes his novel remedy. "But, doctor, I never laugh." The first dose is administered, and the doctor performs for the amusement of his patient with discouraging effect. "You're funny, aren't you?" Jimmie and Gay

join in the "best joke of the season," and agree to assist in the treatment. "One, two, three, go!"

ACT II—Mr. Hanson is shocked by his wife's peculiar conduct and thinks her either intoxicated or delirious. Norah responds to the treatment and agrees to turn herself into an "alarm clock." Mrs. Perry is worried over the matter. The doctor explains the situation to Mr. Hanson and Kitty does her share of "instructing" in the gentle art of laughing. The talk of the town. Treatment concludes in triumph by Dr. Whitcomb's approval of the results obtained, and Mrs. Perry is "converted" to the laughing gospel, even against her will. "He who laughs most, laughs best."

PROPERTIES.

ACT I—Newspaper and cigar for Hanson. Medicine case and pencil for Carey and Whitcomb.

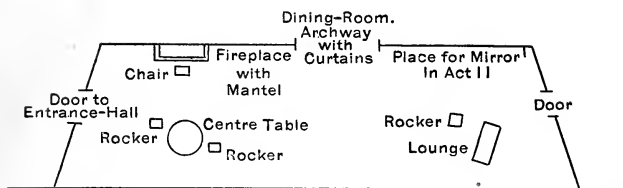
ACT II—Vase of white flowers, tied with black ribbon, for Gay. Red flower. Mirror for Jimmie. Chair for Norah and Jimmie. Bonnet for Mrs. Perry. Watch for Carey and Jimmie. Violets for Jimmie. Note for Norah and Laura. Handkerchief for Kitty.

NOTE FOR PRODUCER.

Of course, the object of this is to "put the laugh over the footlights," and the main thing is to carry the practice stunts far enough to win the laugh, but to stop them at the right moment to avoid being a bore. Each climax should bring the audience to a roar, and then—stop short.

No character is more important than that of Mrs. Perry. Nothing will be more calculated to amuse the audience and send them home talking about the climax than her final conversion. Work up to this well and emphasize it.

STAGE SETTING.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance, upstage, etc.; *R. D.*, right door; *L. D.*, left door, etc.; *D. F.*, door in flat or back of the stage; up-stage, away from footlights, down-stage, near footlights; *1 G.*, first groove, etc. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

THE LAUGHING CURE

ACT I.

SCENE: *Living room of the HANSON home. As elaborately and elegantly furnished as taste and facilities of the producer permit. Archway at center-back, with portieres, leading to dining room; may disclose dining-table in rear if convenient. Door at left, leading to other part of house. Door at right, leading to outer hall. Fireplace with mantel at back, right of center. Lounge across left front, corner-wise. Center table at right-front, with rocker on each side. Rocker also at head of lounge, another in front of fireplace. Flowers and man's hat on table. Lights full on. Slow, sad music takes up curtain. Time, morning.*

CLARKE HANSON *discovered at right of table, reading newspaper. Now and then stirs and looks uneasily toward L. After a moment throws down paper, rises and paces floor, finally goes up, pauses by fireplace, lights cigar but forgets to smoke it, staring dejectedly into fire. Gives long, discouraged sigh as DR. WHITCOMB enters, L., with medicine case. HANSON throws cigar in grate and whirls to face the doctor, meeting him at C.*

HANSON (*eagerly*). How do you find her, doctor?

WHITCOMB (*shaking head dejectedly*). Pretty bad, Hanson; pretty bad. The worst of it is, I can't get hold of the case at all. There seems no organic difficulty, but—

HANSON. That's it; that's it; just what they all say; but—

WHITCOMB. I'm leaving town tonight, too.

HANSON (*frightened*). What?

WHITCOMB. Vacation. Must have it. But my nephew's got some fire to him. I'm leaving him in charge.

HANSON (*in disgust*). Nephew?

WHITCOMB. Yes—St. George Carey—my sister's boy. Just out of college, you know, and next to all the new fads

and isms. I'll bet dollars to doughnuts that he'll sift this trouble of your wife's to the bottom.

HANSON. H'm! If he does—

WHITCOMB (*walking right*). Take my word for it; he will. He's a genius. I've got no end of faith in the kid. (*At door, turns.*) I've left a prescription, and—

HANSON. Isn't Mrs. Hanson—

WHITCOMB. Up? Oh, yes; she's coming down. But—don't worry her. She's nervous, and—(*takes hat from table*).

HANSON (*with gesture of impatience*). Don't I know it? Nothing but a—

Enter LAURA HANSON, L.

LAURA (*in whining, "invalid" tone*). Still here, doctor? I—I—I just wanted to see Clarke a minute before he left for town. But—(*looks uneasily from one to the other, as though wondering what they were discussing*).

WHITCOMB. Just going. I'll send St. George over this morning to look you over, and I've a notion he'll stir things up a little. Good morning.

HANSON and LAURA (*together*). Good morning. (*Exit WHITCOMB. HANSON and LAURA sit lounge.*)

HANSON. And what did the doctor say, Laura?

LAURA. He said—he said—why, what did he say to you?

HANSON. He said—he said—why, not much of anything.

LAURA (*sighing*). Just like a doctor. They never do. (*Great noise out C. Jumps and puts finger in ears. HANSON jumps up, looking C.*) What is that noise?

HANSON. Sounds like Jimmie.

Enter JIMMIE, noisily, C.

HANSON. 'Sh!

JIMMIE. Nix on the hush! This grave's enough to make the liveliest fellow in Kingdom Come enter the eternal silence. (*Comes down to LAURA.*) Matter, Sis? (*Sits. HANSON walks table, looks down.*)

LAURA. Same old thing, Jimmie. (JIMMIE *whistles loudly*.) Dear, me! What a noisy brother!

JIMMIE (*in pretended protest and amazement*). Me noisy? Me? Not guilty. I'm as quiet as a mouse fast asleep. Noisy? Why, Laura! (*Teasingly*.)

LAURA (*innocently*). But, Jimmie, you are. Why, you—

JIMMIE (*rising in despair and groaning loudly*). Oh, Lord, Laura, if you only had a sense of humor!

HANSON (*turning to him sharply*). Don't worry her, Jimmie. She's so nervous and unstrung and out of sorts this morning that—

JIMMIE. This morning? Humph! More than usual?

HANSON (*sternly*). Jimmie!

JIMMIE (*walking down to him*). Can't help it, Clarke. She was my sister before she was your wife, and I just know that if she would perk up a little and act a little bit human—

LAURA (*reproachfully*). Human? Oh, Jimmie!

HANSON (*angrily*). That will do, young man! She is my wife *now*, whosever sister she may have had the misfortune to be born—

JIMMIE (*drops into chair at left of table*). Squelched—good and proper! (*Fans self with newspaper a minute, then jumps up*.) I say, Laura, where's Gay?

LAURA. In the dining room, I think. She was going to write a letter—

JIMMIE (*jealously*). To whom?

LAURA. Well, really, I didn't ask her. I didn't consider—

HANSON (*coming to lounge*). I'm off, Laura. (*Looks watch*.) Late now. Take care of yourself, and—

LAURA (*complainingly*). I'll try, Clarke. But—oh, nobody knows how I suffer!

JIMMIE. And nobody knows how everybody else suffers when you—(HANSON *glares at him and he stops abruptly, acting frightened*.) I'm off, too, Laura. Dining room, did you say? (*Exits C., whistling*.)

LAURA (*looking after him and sighing*) If Jimmie only had some consideration for—

HANSON. I know. It's tough on you, dear, but—(*laughter out C.*) boys will be boys. Once I, myself—(*stops short and sighs*)—but I must go. Be good.

LAURA (*taking him literally*). Good? Why, Clarke, you know I'm always good. I was brought up—

HANSON (*a little impatient at her obtuseness*). Of course, dear. I know. I didn't mean—(*kisses her abruptly*). Good bye. (*Hurries out R.*)

LAURA (*calls after him*). Good bye. Come home early. (*Rises.*) I guess I'll go—

Enter GAY and JIMMIE, C., laughing.

GAY. Oh, Laura! Jimmie and I have got just the loveliest plan! Haven't we, Jimmie? (*They come down.*)

JIMMIE. Take it from me. A humdinger!

GAY (*a little troubled*). If only Kitty—

JIMMIE. Hang Kitty! (*LAURA and GAY catch their breath and he hastens to add—*) Bless Kitty! She always does exactly what I want her to. If she—

LAURA (*sitting*). But the plan—?

GAY. Oh, Laura! It's just too splendid. Why, we can just—

JIMMIE. Can't we, though? And Gay promised to give me eight—

GAY. Eight nothing, Jimmie Mason! It was only three. (*Counts on fingers.*) One, two, three, little boy.

JIMMIE. I was going to say 8 minus 5, if you hadn't been so rude as to interrupt and—

LAURA (*shocked*). Oh, Jimmie! How can you say "rude" to Gay? It isn't—

JIMMIE. Rude, isn't it, Sis? I plead guilty, Gay, and sentence you to—(*Grabs her and whistles waltz air, waltzing her around room to several measures, finally bringing her to lounge.*) Now will you be good?

LAURA. Why, really, Jimmie, it seems to me—

GAY. But isn't it great to—oh, what a joke if—

JIMMIE. 'Sh! Don't mention a *joke*, Gay. That's something that Laura never saw in her life.

GAY. Why, Jimmie Mason!

JIMMIE. Fact! I'm just as 'shamed of it as she is. It's rather a—er—blight on the family record—a "blot on the 'scutcheon," don't you know, and—mental deformity—(*bell rings*)—somebody's coming. (*Tries to peep out R.*)

GAY. Bet it's Kitty now.

JIMMIE. No such luck. She couldn't leave the office.

GAY. But our plan, Laura. You haven't heard—

JIMMIE (*crossing to them*). Yes, our plan, Sis—the best ever—

Enter NORAH, R.

NORAH. A card, mum.

JIMMIE (*crossing to her*). Let me see, mum. (*Reads.*) Mrs. M. E. Perry—Methodist Episcopal Perry—as I live!

LAURA (*pained*). Jimmie! Jimmie! How can you?

GAY. Jimmie, don't.

JIMMIE. Not Jimmie Don't—but Jimmie Mason. What does M. E. stand for, then? Just plain "Me"? It's always meant "Methodist Episcopal" to me.

LAURA. It's "Mary Ellen," of course. Show her in, Norah.

NORAH (*curtseying*). Yis, mum. (*Eyes JIMMIE with admiration.*) Sure it's the bright b'ye he is, jist. (*Exits R.*)

JIMMIE. Yes, always open the door to the church.

Enter MARY ELLEN PERRY, R.

MRS. PERRY. I didn't know that you were able to see any visitors, Mrs. Hanson; but Norah said to come—oh, you poor thing! How bad you look! (*Crosses to her.*)

JIMMIE (*imitating her*). Don't she, Mrs. Perry? And how sad you look!

MRS. PERRY (*resenting his mockery*). What? Sad? I—why, Mr. Mason, I don't—

JIMMIE. Excuse me, Mrs. Perry. I should have said—how mad you look! (*She turns on him angrily, glaring fiercely, but stammers for a word. He laughs teasingly.*)

Come, Gay, let's you 'n me go, while going's good. (*Exit C., hurrying GAY off with him.*)

LAURA (*grieved*). Don't mind him, Mrs. Perry. He's just—Jimmie. He never seems to have any time to think of anybody or anything but his own foolishness. Sit down. You'll excuse me for not rising.

MRS. PERRY (*mollified, sits chair at head of lounge*). Of course. You poor thing! I just told Mr. Perry at breakfast that I was coming right over to see you before I did another thing. I dreamed last night that you were dead, and we were all at the funeral.

LAURA. Dead? Oh, how horrible!

MRS. PERRY. Yes; but of course it's only what everybody's been expecting for so long. You've been enjoying poor health a long time now. You can't expect to hold on forever. Sometime, poor soul, before you know it, the cord will snap, and then—where will you be? Somehow I feel that it must be coming to pass very soon now—sooner than you think. My dream must have been a warning. There you lay—so stiff and white and cold—your hands across your breast—

LAURA (*covers eyes*). Oh, don't, Mrs. Perry! Don't!

MRS. PERRY. And now, to come to see you, and find you so pale and thin and trembling—I tell you, Mrs. Hanson, it's just a warning—a clear warning. Why, Mr. Perry had a sister once that looked just like you. I've often said to Mr. Perry, "How much Mrs. Hanson looks like Myra"—Myra was her name. We all thought she would sometime get to be as well and handsome as any of us, but—she was always ailing, just like you. One night I dreamed she was dead, just like last night about you. Well, Mrs. Hanson, you may believe it or not, but the very next day she took to her bed, and in less than a week was gone—alas!—never to return! I think you ought to be prepared for the worst, Mrs. Hanson—I really do.

LAURA. But I don't seem to get any worse, Mrs. Perry.

MRS. PERRY. Sure you don't. Neither did she. But you never seem to get any better, and—neither did she. I had

my dream, and—well, she passed away, seemingly in a minute, without any further warning. You certainly are paler than when I saw you last, and I don't believe you weigh within twenty pounds as much.

LAURA (*frightened*). Oh, do you think—

MRS. PERRY. I don't think. I *know*! I've seen too many just such cases not to know. And I think you ought to be prepared, and that it's my duty, as a friend and neighbor, to prepare you. And as I told Mr. Perry at the breakfast table, "That poor woman needs cheering up," says I, "for anybody with half an eye can see she's not long for this world. And I'm going right over to carry her what consolation I can." So here I be, Mrs. Hanson, and I hope I've done you good. But I must go on. (*Rises.*) I've got some shopping to do—such pretty things are being sold so cheap now. Too bad you'll never be needing to think of those things any more. (*Laughter out L. LAURA jumps nervously.*) It must be hard on you having such thoughtless young people in the house—and you with one foot in the grave. But that's what I always say. Nobody cares anything for anybody else in this world. The sooner sick folks are dead and out of the way, the better.

LAURA. But they seem very fond of me, Mrs. Perry.

MRS. PERRY. Seem? Yes, it's easy to seem. But the grass won't be more'n started over your head till you'll be entirely forgotten, and your place better filled by somebody else. (*Sighs.*) That's the way of the world.

LAURA. Oh, Mrs. Perry, I'm sure Mr. Hanson would never—

MRS. PERRY. Oh, wouldn't he? Don't you ever think he wouldn't! Men are all alike. As I told Mr. Perry just this morning, "Once Mrs. Hanson is gone—and she's going fast," says I, "Mr. Hanson will spruce up again and have some life about him. That red-haired stenographer will—"

LAURA (*rising*). What?

MRS. PERRY (*uneasily*). Well, maybe I hadn't better say any more. 'Tain't none o' my business. But as I says to Mr. Perry, "Jake," says I, "any time you want a bright and

pretty girl like that hanging around your office, you'll have to get me under the sod first!" That's just what I said to him, word for word. I snumb! There she comes now.

Enter KITTY, R.

KITTY. Good morning, Mrs. Hanson.

LAURA. Good morning, Kitty. This is Mrs. Perry, Kitty. Have you met her? Miss Clyde, Mrs. Perry. (*KITTY shakes hands with MRS. PERRY, MRS. PERRY wincing and trying to pull her hand away.*)

MRS. PERRY. O-o-o-h! (*KITTY releases her, laughing. MRS. PERRY sits rubbing hand.*) Got a gripping way with you, young lady.

KITTY. It's the way I take to "catch on." See? (*Turns to LAURA.*) I had an errand out this way, Mrs. Hanson, and Mr. Hanson asked me to stop and see how you were getting along.

LAURA. It's nice of you to run in, Kitty. (*Sits lounge, pulling skirts aside to make room for KITTY, who sits beside her.*) I'm—I'm not very well, Kitty. Worse, I think.

KITTY. Mr. Hanson is so worried about you.

MRS. PERRY (*eyeing her disapprovingly*). Must be!

KITTY (*emphatically*). He is! He can hardly attend to business this morning.

LAURA. Poor Clarke!

KITTY. Yes, he used to be so jolly and jovial; now he is so sober and serious. He doesn't seem like the same man. I do wish you'd get well, Mrs. Hanson, for his sake as well as your own.

MRS. PERRY (*sarcastically*). Are you *sure*, Miss Clyde?

KITTY. Sure? Why, what a question! Don't you?

MRS. PERRY. I? Why, certainly. But I have no reason to—

KITTY. What is she driving at, Mrs. Hanson? (*Rises.*) I am positively, absolutely, irrevocably and eternally sure. Is that enough? If not—

MRS. PERRY (*uneasily*). Oh, yes! Yes! Quite so!

KITTY (*imitating her*). Are you sure?

MRS. PERRY (*nervously*). Oh, yes! Yes! Quite so!

KITTY (*laughing*). I think so, myself. Where's Jimmie, Mrs. Hanson? (*Walks up C.*)

LAURA. In the dining room, I think. Kitty is going to marry my brother Jimmie, you know, Mrs. Perry. (*Mrs. PERRY sniffs disdainfully.*) You'd better watch him, Kitty. He's considerably taken up with Gay just now.

KITTY (*over shoulder*). He's welcome. So's she. Can't make me jealous. I know my Jimmie.

Enter JIMMIE, C. They meet just inside archway.

JIMMIE. Thank you, Kitty-cat. How's my girl? (*Taking her hands.*)

KITTY. Dandy! How's Gay, you false, deceitful male creature?

JIMMIE. Swell! That's the time when the old chestnut about eavesdroppers didn't shell out right, eh?

KITTY. You bet!

JIMMIE. Come on, Kitten; we've been wishing for you. Got the greatest plan! (*Leads her out C.*)

MRS. PERRY. She's even prettier than I thought. (*Rises.*) I don't suppose I can ask you to visit me ever again in this world, Mrs. Hanson. Well, we all have to die sometime. I'll come in and cheer you up as often as I can. Don't get up. I'll find my way out. (*Exits R.*)

Pause. LAURA weeps. Enter GAY, C.

GAY. Has she gone, Laura?

LAURA. Yes. Boo-hoo-hoo!

GAY. Why, what—(*pause. GAY runs to her.*) Whatever is the matter, Laura?

Enter JIMMIE, R. Looks out R., kissing hand, waving R.

JIMMIE. Bye Bye, honey. (*Crosses to lounge.*)

LAURA. Oh, Gay! Jimmie! I'm going to die! Did you know—

GAY. Die? Oh, don't do that, Laura. Please don't. Wait till—

JIMMIE. That's the last thing I'll ever do, I can tell you

that. And you haven't any right to use us that way, Sis. 'Twouldn't be doing the fair thing to run in a funeral on us, when we want—(LAURA sobs.) Why, Laura, are you serious? Do you mean this? Do you really feel—

LAURA. Yes, I am, and I do, and I—help me upstairs, Gay, will you? I don't want to see another single soul till I get used to this. (*Rises, holding out hands to GAY.*)

GAY. Of course I will.

JIMMIE. But look here, Sis; if you think we're going to let you die just whenever you take a good notion, you've got another think coming, hasn't she, Gay?

GAY (*helping her out L.*). Should say so. Careful, Laura. (*Exeunt GAY and LAURA, L.*)

JIMMIE. Whatever did that Auntie Doleful spring on her to give her any such notions? Plague take a fool woman, anyway! Half of 'em's foolish and the other half crazy.

Enter NORAH, R.

NORAH. Dr. Carey, sir.

Enter DR. CAREY. Exit NORAH.

CAREY. Good morning—why, if it isn't Jimmie Mason.

JIMMIE (*shaking hands*). St. George Carey, as I'm a sinner! Who'd ever have expected to find you prowling around this neck of the woods! Whence cometh thou, brave stranger, and whither art thou bound?

CAREY. I'm here to see Mrs. Hanson. Is she—

JIMMIE. My sister.

CAREY. So? Good! Perhaps, then, you can give me some idea of her case. Uncle seems to be floored entirely by the peculiar symptoms.

JIMMIE. Peculiar nothing. Sit down, Carey. (*Motions to chair on right of table and CAREY sits, JIMMIE sitting left of table.*) I'm mighty glad you are here on this case. I believe you're the boy that can turn the winning trick. Look here, St. George. There's not a darn thing the matter with my sister.

CAREY. What?

JIMMIE. Fact! Chronic indigestion, dumps, nerves and

all that—nothing else. And she's allowed herself to get so blooming despondent and morbid and—oh, well, you know how it goes. I'm no doctor, but I know my sister.

CAREY. I see. (*Thinks deeply.*)

JIMMIE. Settled melancholy, and a desperate dose of blues—and there you've got the sum total of the "peculiar symptoms." If you can knock that—and I've got a hunch that you can—the jig's up.

CAREY. Mostly imagination, then—pure, unadulterated gloom.

JIMMIE. Surest thing in the world! According to the astrologers she was born on a Saturn hour of a Saturn day, in the Saturn month of a Saturn year—with Saturn rising!—can you beat it? Saturnine to a finish!

CAREY. A mental case. Needs psychology more than physics.

JIMMIE (*laughs heartily*). You're the candy kid! I'm no end glad you've come, Carey. I love my sister—heartless as I may seem to the rest of the family—and you may trust me—

CAREY. I can always trust a man who dares to laugh. It's the Lord-of-Heaven in him gushing forth. (*Rises, extending hand, which JIMMIE rises and grasps across table.*) Thanks for the tip, old fellow. We'll knock this dyspepsia into a cocked hat. Where is the patient?

JIMMIE. I'll bring her. (*Exits L.*)

CAREY (*walking to fireplace*). It will certainly be a bright red feather in my cap if I can get hold of this. Uncle sets great store by—

Enter GAY, C.

CAREY. Mrs. Hanson, I believe?

GAY. Don't believe it any longer, sir. I'm only Miss Hanson—Mr. Hanson's sister.

CAREY (*admiringly*). Only!

GAY. I'm just Gay.

CAREY. Glad to hear that. We can't be too gay in this gloomy old world.

GAY. I mean—I am Gay!

CAREY. Yes, I understand perfectly. *Mrs. Hanson isn't. You are.*

GAY. No, no! *Mrs. Hanson's Laura.* I'm *Gay*. Now you understand it. My name is *Gay*.

CAREY. Well, it's all right, too, to have a *gay* name. It gives one something to live up to. Shakespeare says, "What's in a name?" I say, "Everything." With an inspiring name, we are inspired; with a depressing name, we are dragged down. See? My name is *Carey*—see? I carry everything before me. If not too forward for first meeting, may I ask what your *gay* name is?

GAY. It's *Gay*.

CAREY. Yes, you said it was *gay*; but just what?

GAY. Why, I've told you over and over and over. It's *Gay*. (*He stares at her, puzzled.*) *Gay—G-a-y!*

CAREY (*laughs*). I see. That's one on me. *G-a-y, Gay.*

Enter JIMMIE and LAURA, L.

JIMMIE. Here is my sister, *Carey*.

LAURA (*at lounge*). And you are *Dr. Carey*? (*Sits.*)

CAREY. The same.

JIMMIE (*hand on GAY's shoulder*). No poaching, *Carey*.

GAY. Nonsense.

CAREY. Hands off, eh?

JIMMIE. You've guessed it. Have all the fun you want, but don't get *Gay*.

CAREY. I see. Trot away, then, and take the temptation out of my sight. (*Exeunt JIMMIE and GAY, C.*)

LAURA. I am glad to meet you, *Dr. Carey*. But I am afraid you have come too late to do me any good.

CAREY. Nonsense. It's "never too late to mend."

LAURA. Maybe not. But—the case seems hopeless to me.

CAREY. You have the blues, *Mrs. Hanson*. I can see that—a malady I never permit my patients to indulge in. Let me look at your eyes—blue; your tongue—blue; your pulse—blue. Yes, the very air around you is blue. Now this won't do. There's really nothing the matter with you that a week's treatment cannot entirely cure.

LAURA. A week?

CAREY. Yes, if not less. But first, tell me—do you wish to be cured—really and truly, honestly and utterly—want to be well and strong?

LAURA. O don't I?

CAREY. And will you do exactly as I tell you? Follow out every single one of my instructions to the letter, no matter how ridiculous they seem?

LAURA. I'll try—

CAREY. No trying about it. You must *do* it.

LAURA. But what if I can't? I can't do heavy exercising. I'm not very strong and—

CAREY. You can if you will.

LAURA. Very well, then, I will!

CAREY (*holds out hand*). On your word and honor?

LAURA (*extending hand*). On my word and honor.

CAREY. Then listen. Here is my prescription: I want you, every half hour regularly—every thirty minutes, mind you—to laugh—

LAURA (*amazed*). Laugh?

CAREY. Yes, laugh—laugh right out loud—heartily and freely, no matter whether you feel like it or not.

LAURA. But, doctor, I never laugh.

CAREY. Just what I thought.

LAURA. I haven't laughed in years and years.

CAREY. I can see that.

LAURA. How?

CAREY. Why, you look so—pardon me, but I must tell the truth—you look so old, worn-out, wrinkled, sour, glum—it isn't nice to say, I know, but a doctor has to give his patients, not what they like, but what they need.

LAURA. And the medicine?

CAREY. That's the medicine.

LAURA. What? (*Looks around on lounge, etc., to see where he has put it.*) Where?

CAREY. Why, the laugh? You know the Good Book says, "A merry laugh does good like a medicine." A modern science has discovered remedies more potent than drugs in these purely emotional manifestations of physical energy.

Why, Mrs. Hanson, laughing is the one and only faculty that distinguishes man from the lower animals—our only gift in which the poor beast has no share.

LAURA. Wouldn't a—smile—do, once in awhile?

CAREY. Smile between times. Smiling's good; to "keep smiling" is better; but laughing's best. Stop smiling every half hour, long enough to laugh. Believe me, it's good for what ails you; and a boost to your very soul, too.

LAURA. But a gushy, snickering, giggling woman is so silly and shallow. That sort of thing always disgusts me.

CAREY. You and me both. I don't mean a giggle. That's mere affectation and hypocrisy in masquerade costume, donned with deliberate intent to deceive and mislead. An honest laugh never comes in disguise. I mean, laugh—l-a-u-g-h—no substitutes go here. Do you understand?

LAURA. I—guess—so. I am to laugh every thirty minutes regularly—

CAREY. Every thirty minutes at least. As many more as you can crowd in.

LAURA. I see—whether I feel like it or not

CAREY. Exactly. And remember. "Every sigh is a nail driven in your coffin; every laugh is two drawn out." So it's up to you to get busy and pull that coffin to pieces.

LAURA (*shuddering*). Oh, I don't want to die!

CAREY. Die? That's a joke! You're good for ninety years.

LAURA. Ninety years?

CAREY. A hundred, if you want them. You see, it's this way. Your liver's out of order—it's gone on a strike and won't work. Hence, it affects your eyes (*LAURA puts hand to eyes, wonderingly*) and makes everything around you seem to turn blue. Now, you don't really need glasses—

LAURA (*with spirit*). Of course not! My eyesight is perfect. I'm not old.

CAREY. I can only judge by appearances, Mrs. Hanson, and a torpid liver makes every woman look like a crab apple.

LAURA. A crab apple?

CAREY. What you need is to loosen up that liver. What will do it? Nothing in all the world will do it so well as a laugh. Laugh, woman, laugh! It's what God made you for. Laughter re-creates what the Almighty has started to make out of us. Listen: Laugh Loosens Livers, Lightens Loads, Lifts Locked Lips, Leaves Life Lovely. Get the L? Or doesn't it sound like L to you? (*Waits for her to laugh. She looks at him very soberly. He shakes head.*) What? No good? Can't you let it loose?

LAURA. I don't understand. I'm no anatomist. You're the doctor.

CAREY. Well, every laugh goes right to work on that liver—increases the action of all the digestinal apparatus, clears the atmosphere of the stomach so it can see to attend to its business, and then—good-bye, indigestion; good-bye, gloom, depression and death! Welcome laughter and life. Catch on? Laughter is the best tonic in the laboratory of life, and it's cheap, too. Laughter, pure and unadulterated, is bottled life—pull the cork and it effervesces. It's more exhilarating than champagne, but never intoxicates. You must have barrels of it bottled up in you, seeing you've never let any of it out. Pull the stopper and hear it—(*jumps back as if startled*)—zip—boom—fizz—sizzle! No good? (*Again disappointed that she does not laugh.*) Pshaw! Well, I'll try again.

LAURA. But—

CAREY. No "buts." Too late! (*Rises.*) It may seem hard at first—like standing on your head or swinging on a trapeze (*she looks horrified*), but you'll soon get the hang of it, and it will come more naturally every day. It's easy when you get used to it.

LAURA (*dubiously*). Maybe.

CAREY. No May bees about it. This is September. And I *know* what I'm talking about. Laugh till you feel the funny feeling tingling in the very ends of your toes. Keep the laugh in operation till it works 'round to your backbone, and puts all the nerves "in tune with the infinite." Then it will soak into the blood and become a bubbling fountain

of youth and health eternal. And remember, you must take the medicine regularly, exactly as prescribed. No wry faces.

LAURA. When—must—I—begin?

CAREY. Immediately.

LAURA (*astounded*). Today? (*Rises.*)

CAREY. This minute!

LAURA. Oh, but I—

CAREY. What?

LAURA. Why, there isn't a thing to laugh at. I—can't—

CAREY. Must. Just see how easy it is. Watch me. First, stretch your mouth—so (*demonstrates*. LAURA *makes ludicrous attempts to imitate him, putting hand to mouth to see if it's right, etc.*). Pretty good for a beginner, Mrs. Hanson. Yes, I call that pretty good work. Next, pull up the corners of your mouth. (LAURA *draws hers down, pulling long face in consternation.*) No, no, not down—up, up—like a new moon lying on its back. See? (*Demonstrates. Again LAURA attempts to follow him with ludicrous effect.*) Good! Good! You're coming fine, Mrs. Hanson. Muscles not regularly used are always hard to break in to new exercise, of course; but we're getting there, aren't we? Now for the third step. Let me see. Now, what is the very funniest thing you ever heard of in all your life?

LAURA. Funny? Why, I don't know. I never do hear any funny things, you know.

CAREY. Oh, but you must hear funny things, Mrs. Hanson. You can't help it. This is a screamingly funny world, chock full of funny people and things. It keeps me laughing all the time. When I can't find anything else, I laugh at myself. It must be that your education has been sadly neglected that you can't see just how immensely funny we all are. Come, now, you must have heard something in your life, sometime, that seemed funny to you. Think hard.

LAURA (*pauses some time, thinking, then ventures, uncertainly*). Why—there's—this!

CAREY (*looking around*). What?

LAURA. This—er—medicine of yours. It's about the funniest thing I ever heard. And, then—er—you. You're funny, aren't you?

CAREY. Me?

LAURA. You said—you laughed at yourself sometimes. I thought—you must think you were—er—funny.

CAREY. Maybe so; maybe so. You never can tell. If you think I am, why, then I am! Laugh at me! Laugh hard! (*Pause. She holds sober face.*) Oh, I am a funny thing! I'm the funniest fellow that ever came down from the moon. (*Holds up finger.*) See my finger. Watch it wiggle. It's the funniest thing in the world to watch my thumb dance the tango—if I could only make you think so! Shall I stand on my head? Dance a Dutch clog? Or—or—make love to you? I'm the funniest thing in the world when I try to make love. There's a little laughing devil in my eye—see him? (*Goes close to her, opening eyes wide and smiling broadly.*) No? Oh, dear! Dear! What stunt shall I try next? Presto Chango! Watch the man turn into a monkey! (*Turns a cart wheel, somersault, handspring or any preferred "stunt." Rises and bows low, performer style, hand on heart. While performing—*)

Enter NORA H, C.

NORA H. The blissid saints persarve me! (*Holds up hands in amazement, mouth and eyes wide open.*) Sure, it's a crazy man the feller's afther bein'. This is no place for a dacent Oirish girl, at all, at all! (*Backs out C. in terror.*)

LAURA. Are you—real, Dr. Carey?

CAREY. The realest kind of a real. Why?

LAURA. I—I—I was afraid I had gone out of my head, and was—

CAREY. Seeing things eh? That's a good one! No, I'm the real thing, Mrs. Hanson, and I'm going to *make* you laugh—not because I tell you to, but because you can't help it. Understand?

LAURA. I—guess—so.

CAREY. Think and think and think what a funny fellow

I am, and how much I make you laugh, and then open your mouth wide—and let it out big—ha, ha, ha! (*Demonstrates. LAURA attempts to imitate with ludicrous results. He eyes her critically.*) Not very good. Better than nothing, of course; but—if I'm not any funnier than that, I must be a —chestnut! Nothing doing for me in the comedy roles. Come, Mrs. Hanson. Life is a joke—a huge joke—whether it's on us or the other fellow; and when we can see it—well, then, it isn't on us. We have to laugh at the funny, funny world, and its funny, funny people, to keep that same world and its people from laughing at us—see? And if they do laugh at us—why, if we laugh *with* them, the joke isn't on us, after all! We can make them laugh with us, if we try.

“Laugh, and the world laughs with you—
Mope, and you dope alone!”

And Pope says:

“Laugh at your friends, and if your friends are sore,
So much the better, you may laugh the more.”

Got rested for another try? (*She hangs head, looking very hopeless.*) Oh, come now. I know you can do better than you did the last time. Come, now, laugh with me. One, two, three—go! Ha, ha, ha!

LAURA (*tamely*). Ha, ha, ha!

CAREY (*heartily*). Ha, ha, ha!

LAURA (*a little better, but still very hollow and mirthless*). Ha, ha, ha!

CAREY. Better, but—let's have another. Ha, ha, ha!

LAURA (*bravely and ridiculously trying her best*). Ha, ha, ha! (*Continue ad. lib., being careful not to overdo it.*)

CAREY (*clapping hands*). Good! Good! You'll do, all right, all right.

Enter JIMMIE and GAY, hastily, C.

JIMMIE (*coming down to them in alarm*). For heaven's sake, what's wrong, Laura? Hysterics?

GAY (*following, greatly worried*). Is she delirious, doctor?

CAREY. Not a bit of it! Ha, ha, ha! Isn't that a funny idea, Mrs. Hanson? Let's laugh about it—ha, ha, ha! Good! Good! Just a dose of medicine, Mason—the-get-well-quick remedy. Don't you see? My prescription, if you please, and it's working already.

JIMMIE (*puzzled, but relieved*). Prescription?

GAY. Medicine? Some kind of liquor? You don't mean she's —er—intoxicated? I don't think it would be right to—

CAREY. Nothing of the kind. Just my own personal prescription. Dose, one good laugh, regularly, every thirty minutes.

JIMMIE. Oho! I see! Gee! That's corking! She's what you might call a Laughophone. Ha, ha, ha!

GAY. Laughophone? How funny! Ha, ha, ha!

LAURA (*making wry face, in all seriousness*). It's no laughing matter.

CAREY. No? I thought you and I had agreed that it was. Laugh, please.

JIMMIE (*holding sides*). Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I shall die, I know I shall! Just hold that grin till I get my kodak, Sis. Wouldn't it be a corker to go on the international record as "The Only Living Freak in Captivity!—The Lady Who Laughs to Order!—Dose, One Laugh Every Thirty Minutes!"

CAREY. And you'll see she takes it, won't you—both of you?

JIMMIE. Sure, we will! We'll be nurses, always on the job to administer the pill! Ha, ha, ha!

GAY. Or the powder! That's what explodes! Ha, ha, ha!

CAREY. You see, Mrs. Hanson, how funny they think it is. It's the best joke of the season. Let's all laugh. Come on, everybody—one, two, three—go! (*Takes pencil from pocket and steps back, waving it as a baton, while the others line up in front, JIMMIE and GAY on each side of LAURA, holding her hands. Laugh ad. lib. When audience is in a roar—*)

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE: *Same as Act I. Quick, lively music at rise of curtain. Lights on full throughout act. Pause.*

Enter GAY, C., with vase of white flowers.

GAY (*reading card tied to flowers*). "With Mrs. M. E. Perry's sympathy and saddest anticipations." Humph! Wonder what she means. And tied with black ribbon, too. Looks like a funeral. (*Puts vase on mantel, stepping back to note effect. Shakes head, walks back and changes it to other side of mantel. Steps back, holding head first one side and then the other. Shakes head, finally going to bouquet on center table and drawing out a bright red blossom, which she places in center of white. Walks down, thoughtfully, suddenly giving a hearty laugh, as—*

Enter JIMMIE, C. Comes down behind her.

JIMMIE. Having a vaudeville all by your lonesome? (*She looks back over shoulder with grimace.*) Sounds good to me, Gay—so gay and sweet. But tell me the joke, won't you, so I can laugh, too?

GAY. No joke at all—that is, nothing new. I just happened to think how utterly ridiculous Laura did look this morning when she was taking her laughing lesson, and then I wondered what Clarke would have to say about it.

JIMMIE. Poor devil! He's had a—well, a dickens of a time lately.

GAY. Yes, he was a "jolly good fellow" when he was a bachelor; but since his marriage he seems to have lost all the fun he had in him.

JIMMIE. Do you think he'll be able to see the joke in this?

GAY (*shaking head slowly*). I'm wondering.

Enter HANSON, R.

HANSON. Luncheon ready?

GAY. Nearly.

HANSON. Did the new doctor call on Laura? (*Walks fireplace, stands by it.*)

GAY. Yes.

HANSON. What did he think of her?

JIMMIE. Didn't say.

HANSON. What? Humph! What did she think of him?

JIMMIE. Same thing.

HANSON. How is she?

GAY. We think she's a lot better already, Clarke.

HANSON. Already? Has he begun treatment?

JIMMIE. Surest thing you know. No dilly-dally about Carey, believe me! He's an old pal of mine at college—one of our frat., and they say he's remarkably skillful in cases like these.

HANSON. It is to be hoped so, certainly.

GAY (*enthusiastically*). Oh, I just know he'll do her a world of good!

HANSON. What is the nature of his treatment?

JIMMIE. Well—er—I don't know what he calls it. It's decidedly original and up-to-the-minute, but—search me for the technical phraseology. What did he call it, Gay?

GAY. Didn't call it while I was present. Some modern discovery, I believe.

HANSON. Does Laura like it?

JIMMIE. Why—er—she seemed to.

HANSON (*sighing*). Well, poor girl! She has suffered long enough.

JIMMIE (*sighing and imitating his tone*). And so have we all.

HANSON (*turning and walking down to him*). Jimmie, your heartless attitude toward your poor sister—

Enter LAURA, C.

LAURA. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

HANSON (*turning swiftly*). Oh, Laura, Laura! Whatever is the matter? Are you worse, dear? Tell me—where do you feel bad? (*Goes to her, supporting her with arm and trying to lead her toward lounge. Speaks very soothingly.*) Does it hurt dreadfully?

LAURA. Why, no, Clarke. I don't feel bad. And nothing hurts—at least, not very much. It's my—medicine.

HANSON. Medicine? Medicine? What has that fool doctor been giving you? (*Looks from one to the other in alarm.*) Jimmie! Gay! What does this mean? Do you realize that your poor sister is under the influence of some miserable dope—or else entirely out of her mind? (*Turns to LAURA.*) Do you know me, dear? Are you sure that you know me? Oh, what a terrible thing it is!

LAURA. No, no, Clarke. Listen! It isn't dope—not real dope that you swallow—or stick in your arm or anything like that. But it is medicine just the same—treatment, the doctor calls it—a sort of physical culture, I suppose—

JIMMIE. Emotional culture, Laura. Growing a sense of humor in barren soil.

LAURA. What do you mean, Jimmie? Clarke won't understand that—any more than I do. (*JIMMIE throws up hands in despair.*) It's exercises, Clarke—the prescription is, you know; and I have to do it—one laugh every thirty minutes.

HANSON. Laugh? Laugh? (*Looks around group appealingly, runs fingers through hair.*) Are you crazy—or am I?

LAURA (*innocently*). I think it must be Dr. Carey, Clarke. It's just what he told me, word for word. Isn't it? (*To JIMMIE and GAY.*)

JIMMIE (*nodding*). Word for—

GAY (*nodding*). Word.

HANSON. To laugh? (*They all nod.*) Just a common, ordinary laugh? (*They all nod.*) Why, how funny! That's the strangest—(*pause. The humor of it suddenly strikes him and he bursts out.*) Ha, ha, ha!

Enter NORA, C.

JIMMIE. I thought you'd catch the drift—ha, ha, ha!

GAY. It makes me laugh whenever I—ha, ha, ha!

LAURA. If you aren't the craziest—what in the world are you all laughing at? You look so silly—ha, ha, ha! (*Laughs naturally, then catches herself and stops in amazement.*) Why, I—I—laughed again, didn't I?

JIMMIE. You sure did, Sis—just as if you meant it.

LAURA (*bewildered in her action*). Why, I—didn't mean to. You all looked so foolish and funny I just couldn't help it.

GAY. That's the first natural laugh I ever heard Laura give.

JIMMIE. Sounds ripping—eh?

HANSON (*not fully satisfied*). Are you perfectly sure you are feeling all right, Laura? Not light-headed, or dizzy, or anything like that?

LAURA. Why, of course.

HANSON. Well, I haven't heard anything so absurd in a long, long time. I believe it makes me feel better, too. Maybe it will do us all good.

JIMMIE. Nothing like it.

NORAH (*who has been watching them with comical expressions of interest and wonder from archway*). Sure, an' lunch is coolin', mum.

JIMMIE (*starts C.*). Sure, an' ain't yez foolin', mum? (*NORAH puts hands on hips and stares at him disdainfully. He imitates her action exactly. She backs toward doorway. He backs toward front. She drops hands and clenches right fist, starting toward him angrily. He imitates. They meet. He grasps her right hand with his and with the left tickles her under the chin. She bursts out laughing.*)

JIMMIE (*over shoulder*). See, Laura, how easy it comes with Norah.

NORAH (*coquettishly*). Sure, an' yez would be afther makin' a pig squeal wid yez blarney.

JIMMIE. Like blarney, don't you, Norah.

NORAH. It's not mesilf is sayin' a yes or a no, Mистер Jiminy. It's an impudent broth of a b'ye yez be.

JIMMIE. Like impudent broths of b'yes, don't you, Norah?

NORAH. O'im not a-sayin'. Go long wid yez, now. It's not mesilf as has any toime to be afther a-wastin' wid the loikes o' yez, an' me lunch—

JIMMIE (*comically, holding both her hands*). Sure, and the lunch—

NORAH. Cooling. (*He tickles her under chin, holding both hands in one.*) Ha, ha, ha!

JIMMIE. Fooling. (*Tickles her in ribs as he releases her.*)

NORAH (*as she exits C.*). Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

JIMMIE. Norah's caught it all right. Come, Gay. (*Offers arm to GAY and they exeunt C.*)

HANSON. Come, Laura. (*They follow out C., arm in arm. If table is in view behind curtains they take seats about it and pantomime eating.*)

After brief pause, re-enter JIMMIE, C., carrying full length mirror.

JIMMIE. Oh, Norah! (*Looks back C., calling.*) Come and help me hang this mirror before I feed my face. Bring a chair, please. (*Walks down, looking around for place to hang it.*) Go on with your chewing out there. Don't wait for me.

Enter NORAH, C., with chair.

JIMMIE. Put it here, Norah. (*Motions to place at left of archway, just opposite fireplace. She places the chair and stands with hands on hips, watching him. He climbs on chair and busies himself hanging mirror.*)

NORAH. Sure, an' what is it yez be afther a-wantin' o' me?

JIMMIE. I like the looks of you, Norah. (*She sniffs, starts out.*) Wait! Steady the chair for me, won't you, while I do the trick? (*She obeys.*) Listen, Norah. (*Drops his voice and speaks mysteriously.*) We want you to help us a little.

NORAH. Sure, now, and ain't I a-doin' that same the whole blissid day o' mine. It's no toime I'm a-wastin' at all, at all.

JIMMIE. True enough, Norah, me darlint. But see here. The doctor wants my sister to laugh every half hour.

NORAH. To laugh, is it? Humph! And yez want me to be afther a-ticklin' her under the chin and poking her in the ribs?

JIMMIE. No, no! Nothing of that sort. Just help her to remember. That's all. Keep watch of the time, you know, and tell her when its time for a dose. See?

NORAH. I see. It's an alarm clock yez want me to be afther a-turnin' meself into, is it?

JIMMIE (*stepping down*). You've got it, Norah.

NORAH. Sure, an' that'll be aisy.

JIMMIE. That's all, then. (*She starts to take chair.*) I'll bring the chair. (*Exit NORAH, C., followed by JIMMIE with chair.*)

Pause. Enter MRS. PERRY, R.

MRS. PERRY. I rang twice and couldn't get an answer, so I came right in. I'm afraid poor Mrs. Hanson must be very much worse. (*Looks all around.*) Nobody home? Humph! Well, I'll sit down and wait. Perhaps the doctor is with her. (*Laughter out C.*) There they are, eating, drinking and making merry, while that poor woman is probably breathing her last, neglected and forsaken. (*Sits chair right of table.*) It's too cruel! But—(*sighs*)—that's the way of the world.

Enter CAREY, R. MRS. PERRY rises and faces him.

CAREY. How do you do, madam?

MRS. PERRY. How do you do, sir? Are you—oh, you can't be the undertaker?

CAREY. Undertaker? Great Scott, no! At least, I never undertake anything I can't finish. Why? What made you—

MRS. PERRY. Oh, I feared poor, dear Mrs. Hanson was dead—

CAREY. Dead? Why? What has happened? Accident?

MRS. PERRY. Why, no; not that I've heard. But I saw her this morning and she was certainly dying if ever a woman was.

CAREY. Must have seen her after I did, then, madam, for she was a mighty lively corpse when I left—

MRS. PERRY. You? Then you are—

CAREY. Dr. Carey, at your service.

MRS. PERRY. Then my impression was right. She is worse. They *have* called a consultation.

CAREY. Not on your life! No consultation for mine. I'm the one and only—

MRS. PERRY. You don't mean they've discharged Old Whitcomb?

CAREY (*with dignity*). "Old Whitcomb," as you are pleased to call him, is my uncle—a most estimable and efficient practitioner. I am attending this case under his instructions.

MRS. PERRY. I—er—I ask your pardon, I'm sure, doctor, I—

CAREY (*walks up to fireplace*). Oh, don't mention it.

MRS. PERRY (*follows him, speaking mysteriously*). Why? Is it a secret? I thought there was something not just right about Mrs. Hanson. Is she—

Enter HANSON and LAURA, C. Walk down.

LAURA. Ha, ha, ha!

MRS. PERRY. O listen! She's out of her head, isn't she? Is she—dangerous?

LAURA. There's Mrs. Perry, Clarke. I'm afraid she—

Enter JIMMIE and GAY, C. Walk down.

JIMMIE. Leave the old lady to me, Sis. (*Walks up to fireplace, and engages MRS. PERRY in conversation, while CAREY walks down. MRS. PERRY sits in front of fireplace, JIMMIE stands at her right.*)

HANSON (*meets CAREY, C., while LAURA and GAY sit lounge*). Well, doctor, I'm glad to meet you.

CAREY (*shaking hands*). Here, too, Mr. Hanson. (*They walk down toward ladies.*) I just dropped in to see how my patient was obeying instructions. (*Looks watch.*) Time to laugh, Mrs. Hanson.

LAURA. O I've taken one good dose this time, haven't I, Clarke?

CAREY. Good for you! Swell dope, ain't it? Was it very bitter?

LAURA. Why, no! Not half so bad as I expected.

CAREY. Nothing on earth is ever half so bad as we expect.

"From the day you are born, till you ride in the hearse, There is nothing so bad but it might have been worse!" Trouble, you know, always comes butt-end first, so we get much the worst of it as we watch it on its way. The other end tapers out to a fine point, and, at the very end, explodes in a laugh! The biggest troubles in life are all in the mind, and never really get born into being. Laugh,—and lo! they vanish, as if by magic—go up in the vapor of your breath, you see!

HANSON. Is that—scientific?

CAREY. Just plain horse sense, Hanson. (*They walk to table, stand by it—HANSON behind it, CAREY at L.*)

HANSON (*nodding to LAURA, confidentially*). How did you ever manage to do it?

CAREY. Well, her first giggle was like pulling a wisdom tooth; it came mighty hard, for the root went down deep into the bone. But, after that gruesome noise got past her teeth, the next wasn't so painful—either for her or me; and it has kept on getting easier until now, I see, she laughs right out—almost as though she liked it.

HANSON (*looking across at her*). It seems like a miracle.

CAREY. There's hope for her, all right, Hanson. When the heart gets so full of real, living fun that it bubbles out at the lips in spite of her, there's never any room left for dyspeptic difficulties. Man, it's the discovery of the age—the salvation of the world! (*Turns to face front.*) There's no drug in all the world's laboratories to equal in true remedial potency the magic quintessence of a spontaneous laugh!

JIMMIE. Big words, fellow!

LAURA (*uncertainly*). But when there isn't anything to laugh at—

GAY. Then laugh because there isn't! That would be a joke on the doctor, wouldn't it?

CAREY. Sure! Instead of worrying because you can't find anything to worry about, laugh because you can't find anything to laugh about!

HANSON. I'll take you to a musical comedy tonight, Laura.

CAREY (*turning to him*). Heavens, no! not that! I want her to *laugh*!

JIMMIE. Come over, Sister, and "show toofies" for the lady. (LAURA *rises, crosses to* JIMMIE and MRS. PERRY. CAREY *sits lounge with* GAY.)

MRS. PERRY. Your brother says you are trying a new treatment.

LAURA. Just began this morning.

MRS. PERRY. Dear me! Have you any faith in all these new-fangled fads and fandangoes?

LAURA. I don't know as I have. But if they are harmless, they can't injure you; and when a woman feels as badly as I do, she gets to a place where she is willing to try almost anything to get relief.

MRS. PERRY. I suppose so, poor soul! But—I wouldn't run any risks, if I was you. A woman in your condition—(*shakes head sadly, shaking her bonnet so that it hangs over one ear.* LAURA *laughs loudly.*)

HANSON (*whirls to look at her with expression of surprise and pleasure*). Why what—

GAY (*looking up from her conversation with* CAREY). What is it?

LAURA (*looking apologetically at* MRS. PERRY.) I don't think I know. I—er—just couldn't help it.

GAY (*to* CAREY). That's the second time she couldn't help it.

CAREY. Hurrah for us!

MRS. PERRY. High strikes, that's what it is, nothing else! (CAREY *laughs. She glares at him.*) Is the man a down-right fool?

CAREY. Better a laughing fool than a sighing sage! The joker always takes the trick.

MRS. PERRY (*turning to* HANSON). I wouldn't trust that doctor with the case a minute, Mr. Hanson. Of course, you didn't ask my opinion, but—I'm not charging you a cent for

it. The woman's losing her mind. There's no question about it. (*Walks R.*)

HANSON. Thank you, Mrs. Perry, but I feel quite well satisfied with the doctor's methods.

MRS. PERRY. Humph! (*Holds out hand to LAURA.*) Well, good-bye, Mrs. Hanson. May the good Lord look after you. These folks won't! (*Glares at the group, as she exits, R., in great dignity.*)

CAREY. Don't you care, Mrs. Hanson. Remember, she whose laugh lasts, laughs best. (*Turns to GAY, who sits by him on lounge. HANSON talks to LAURA and JIMMIE, at fireplace.*) Look here, gay lady, or Lady Gay, has that young fellow (*nodding toward JIMMIE*) really and irrevocably got a mortgage on you?

GAY. Nothing doing!

CAREY. He seems to think he has.

GAY. Just his taking way!

CAREY. Give me leave to butt in?

GAY. The idea! The fellow that needs—

CAREY (*taking her hand*). I get you!

GAY (*drawing hand away*). Not yet!

CAREY (*nodding with assurance*). But soon!

HANSON (*turns from group and faces front*). Well, I must get back to the office.

CAREY (*rising*). I'll go with you, Hanson. I'd like to talk the case over a little with you. (*Turns to LAURA.*) Don't forget your laughs, Mrs. Hanson. You're looking a year younger since morning. Liver's waking up! Health is in your reach. As the kids say:

“Grab it! Nab it!

Get the laughing habit!”

It is magic in its power—a nectar of soul that charms away all evils and performs all miracles. (*Looks watch.*)

LAURA. What time is it?

CAREY. Laughing time!

LAURA. Is it? Dear me! What can I laugh at this time?

JIMMIE. Try Mrs. Perry's bonnet!

LAURA. That was funny,—ha, ha, ha!

HANSON. Pretty good for you.

CAREY. Try again, and we'll all help you! (*All laugh as*

HANSON and CAREY *exeunt, R.*)

JIMMIE (*looks watch*). Gee! I must be off, too!

GAY. You are—decidedly!

JIMMIE. What?

GAY (*tapping head significantly*). Nobody home!

JIMMIE (*in mock despair*). This from you, Gay? (*Comically*). Good night! (*Exits C.*)

GAY. Jimmie's what Kipling would call "most 'scruciating silly!"

JIMMIE *sticks head in, C.*

JIMMIE. Come and help me find my hat, Gay.

GAY (*comically*). Good night! (*Exits. JIMMIE withdraws.*)

LAURA. I don't seem to feel any great loosening up of my liver! (*Feels all over chest.*) Where is my liver, anyway? Dear me, where is it? Maybe I haven't any! Maybe it's all dried up and blown away! O I wonder if it has! That would be a joke on—somebody—sure; but who? I must get to practicing that laugh! I simply can't manage it, somehow! (*Goes to mirror, and grimaces.*) Let me see. First, stretch my mouth—so! Then, turn the corners up—so—no, that doesn't look right—this way. No, that doesn't look a bit like Dr. Carey! This way—that's better!

Enter NORA, C. Attempts to speak, but sees the face LAURA is making and stares at her a little, finally backing out, frightened.

LAURA. Now, what next? Fix the mind on something funny—Dr. Carey, I suppose, for he is funny, I don't doubt; at any rate, he thinks he is. Then, open the mouth wide (*demonstrates, several attempts*) and let it out. Now, let me see! My! it's hard! (*Speaks without spirit or accent, as if by rote.*) Oh! what a funny fellow Dr. Carey is! Ha, ha, ha! (*Tries the laugh, over and over.*)

Re-enter NORA, R. Pantomime as before. Finally speaks, with comical gesture.

NORAH. Begorra, now! It's a tee-hee's nest she's been afther a-foindin', wid a hull dozen an' two o' them haw-haw's eggs insoide it! (*Throws up hands and exits, R., in terror.*) Not for Norah, at all, at all!

LAURA (*not seeing her at all*). It doesn't sound just right, somehow, and I simply can't make it. Ha, ha, ha. (*Laugh continued in various keys, ad. lib.*)

Enter KITTY, R.

KITTY. Norah didn't dare announce me, she said. Why, what in the world are you doing, Mrs. Hanson?

LAURA (*turning, in embarrassment*). Oh! Why, Kitty Clyde, where'd you come from?

KITTY. Office! Mr. Hanson sent me to tell you it was time to laugh, but I see I don't need to tell you.

LAURA. No, I—was practicing!

KITTY. I see. (*Walks lounge.*) They're having great fun at the office about you.

LAURA (*walks lounge to meet her*). About me?

KITTY. Should say so.

LAURA. But I don't understand. (*Sits lounge, motions KITTY to chair.*)

KITTY (*sits*). Nothing very subtle about it. You see, Mr. Hanson was so tickled over the doctor's treatment (*giggles*) that he couldn't keep it to himself. It wouldn't be right, now, would it? Such a perfectly good joke going to waste!

LAURA. I suppose not.

KITTY. Why don't you laugh about it then?

LAURA. Thank you, I will—ha, ha, ha!

KITTY. That isn't the way we all laughed at the office when Mr. Hanson told us. We were fairly tickled to pieces. Jack Benson said he'd better give you some laughing gas. (*Both laugh.*) Then Charlie White asked Mr. Hanson what he'd pay a fellow an hour to come over and tickle you in the ribs.

LAURA. Tickle me in the ribs? The idea!

KITTY. Why, it was a joke, Mrs. Hanson. Laugh!

LAURA. I see. (*They both laugh.*)

KITTY. Westly Reed wanted to know if you were from England.

LAURA (*bewildered*). England? Why?

KITTY. Why, they never see a joke over there without a microscope.

LAURA. Never see a joke? But what of—O I see! That's funny, too, isn't it? (*Both laugh. From this on, LAURA'S laughs come more easy and natural, the treatment evidently taking effect.*)

KITTY. The office boy advised Mr. Hanson to have you read "Pigs is Pigs" or "David Harum," and go to the vaudeville; but—well, that sort of thing wouldn't make me laugh. I told Sam—that's the office boy—that if he'd come over and just stick himself up against the wall, or in a corner, that you'd have a standing joke.

LAURA. A standing joke? (*Pause, thinking it out.*) O I see! He would stand up, and he's a joke!

KITTY. Exactly. How soon you see the point! Well, Jack Benson's wife came in to stump Jack for some coin, and of course, she had to hear it all. She thought it was the funniest thing she'd ever heard. So by this time, it's all over town. (*Laughs.*)

LAURA. Dear me! is that funny, too?

KITTY. I don't know. It rather tickled my funny-bone. But you are just as funny as funny can be, you dear thing, and you don't know what a deliciously funny thing you are. (*Leaves chair and sits lounge, hugging LAURA.*)

LAURA. Am I a joke, too?

KITTY. Not a joke. Just dear and lovely, and quite too funny! Better than the Newly-Weds in the Funny. Let's laugh! (*They both laugh.*)

Enter GAY and JIMMIE, C. JIMMIE has bunch of violets.

KITTY (*jumping up*). Jimmie, as I live! Excuse me, while I give vent to "a long, low whistle of surprise!" (*Whistles.*) Whew!

JIMMIE. Clarke said you were here, old girl, so I brought you the flowers for the hop tonight.

KITTY. Violets? How lovely! (*Takes them and smells them.*) And there's still a little dew on them!

JIMMIE (*dropping head*). Yes, there is; but I'm going to pay it tomorrow! But how'd you know? Did that confounded florist send the bill "concealed within"? (*Turns to GAY.*)

KITTY. Jimmie, be decent. Excuse me while I nurse my jealous rage in sullen silence. Who's the girl?

JIMMIE (*leading GAY to KITTY*). Just Gay!

KITTY. I see! Well, don't get too gay with my Jimmy! He's no good, in all the world—but I kind of like him! (*Pins violets in belt.*)

GAY (*sits lounge by LAURA*). Your property is in no danger, Kitty, I assure you. Nobody but yourself could ever have taken pin on him!

KITTY. Excuse me while I indulge in a "low, mirthless laugh." (*Laughs.*)

LAURA. O is it time to laugh? Ha, ha, ha!

JIMMIE. Is that the best you can do? (*She laughs again, more heartily.*) We are going to star you in our new drama as Minnehaha, Laughing Water, Sis!

GAY. Make it "Laurahaha!"

KITTY. Laughing Laura!

Enter MRS. PERRY, R.

MRS. PERRY. I couldn't go back home, Mrs. Hanson, without letting you know what everybody on the street is saying about you. Are you really letting that fool doctor—

LAURA (*rising*). I don't know what you are saying, Mrs. Perry.

MRS. PERRY. Why, you're the talk of the town!

LAURA. Already?

MRS. PERRY. Yes; and every time your name is mentioned, they laugh. Do you want to be a laughing stock to the whole community?

LAURA. Why, I don't mind. If they need to laugh as badly as I did!

MRS. PERRY. What?

LAURA. I mean it. While they are laughing at me, they're letting you rest.

MRS. PERRY. Well, all I can say is, if you want to make a fool of yourself by stretching your mouth from ear to ear, you can; but as for me, I'm a respectable woman, I am, and I don't propose to make a monkey of myself—

JIMMIE (*out of patience*). No need, Madam! Nature has done the trick for you.

MRS. PERRY. Sir?

Enter NORAH, C.

NORAH. A note for yez, mum!

LAURA. Thank you! (*Takes and reads.*) "Dear Laura: Time to laugh!" Dear me, how funny! Ha, ha, ha!

KITTY. Isn't Mr. Hanson the limit? Ha, ha, ha!

JIMMIE. Limit is right, ha, ha, ha!

GAY. And then some, ha, ha, ha!

NORAH (*backing toward C.*) Sure, and it's bughouse this hull bunch is, begorra, but it's mesilf as loikes it, jist—ha, ha, ha! (*Exits C.*)

MRS. PERRY. Humph! (*Exits R. in great disdain.*)

KITTY. Excuse me while I wipe the burning tears from my dewy orbs. (*Wipes eyes on handkerchief.*)

JIMMIE. Don't cry Kitty. I do love you most to death, honest I do!

KITTY. Ah! your words make me happy, Jimmy-boy. I feared you had deserted me. You flood my heart with joy. (*Turns to LAURA.*) I mustn't forget to tell you what Jeff said—Jeff Whitney, you know. He said, "Gee, Clarke, don't let her keep that up too long. It's 'laugh and grow fat,' you know, and if she sticks to it till she gets up a 250-pound bulk, you'll have some armful!" That's what he said, and just the way he said it. The best of it is that his wife is a heavy-weight! (*All laugh.*)

GAY. But you haven't got all the variations on the laugh, Laura. You know they claim a woman's laugh goes in "Four Fits."

LAURA. It seems to be giving everybody fits!

GAY. There's the "Ho, ho, ho" of amusement; the "Ha

ha, ha!" of ridicule; the "Hoo, hoo, hoo!" of the man-seeker; and the "He, he, he!" of the woman in love.

LAURA. Do I have to practice them all?

KITTY. Sure thing!

GAY. Try them, Laura. Begin with a "Ho, ho, ho!"

LAURA (*after several grimaces*). How do you fix your mouth?

KITTY (*pursing up lips in O*). Like this!

JIMMIE (*making for her, as she backs off*). Look out, Kitty! 'Taint fair to tempt a man beyond what he's decently able to stand.

KITTY (*pushing him away*). Be good, Jimmie! (*Sits chair, head of lounge. JIMMIE sits on arm of it.*)

GAY. Try it, Laura.

LAURA. Ho, ho ho!

KITTY. That's good! (*JIMMIE claps hands.*)

GAY. Now, "Hoo, hoo, hoo"—same position!

LAURA. Hoo, hoo, hoo!

JIMMIE. You, you, you, Sis! I'll vote for you, every time!

KITTY. Now, "He, he, he!"

JIMMIE. That's "Me, me, me!"

KITTY. Be good, I tell you. I can't help Gay be yellow-cution teacher, and a monkey-trainer, too!

JIMMIE. Stung again!

GAY. Try it, Laura. It's easy!

LAURA. He, he, he!

Enter HANSON and CAREY, R.

GAY. And enter He, just at the right psychological moment!

HANSON. How's our Laughing Lady now?

CAREY. And how's her liver?

HANSON. Fully clothed and in her right voice, I hear. And O Laura! You're the star comedian in a six-reel film! (*All rise. LAURA and GAY in front of lounge, KITTY and JIMMIE back at C., HANSON and CAREY, R.*)

LAURA. How's that?

HANSON. You're in the spot-light, all right. Listen!

I couldn't keep such a good story all to myself, could I?

JIMMIE. It would be a criminal offense!

KITTY. Cruelty to animals!

HANSON. Well, I told my clerks.

CAREY. And they laughed. (*All laugh.*)

HANSON. They told their wives!

CAREY. And their wives laughed! (*All laugh.*)

HANSON. The wives told their friends!

CAREY. And their friends laughed! (*All laugh.*)

HANSON. These friends told *their* friends!

CAREY. And their friends laughed! (*All laugh.*)

HANSON. The children begged for a story!

CAREY. And they got it!

HANSON. And they're laughing yet!

JIMMIE. "The little dogs laugh to see such sport," Sis! It's a regular merry-go-round of a laugh, eh?

LAURA (*dubiously*). But are they laughing *at* me, or *with* me?

HANSON. With—every man, woman and child of them!

CAREY. "Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and it laughs *at* you!" So stick to your regular dose, Mrs. Hanson, and have no fear. "It is to laugh," as the French say. And—(*pauses with comic gesture*) isn't it? All the world loves a laugher! It's the spread of the glad gospel! Everybody suddenly sees what a funny world it is.

HANSON. Yes! All the people I meet on the street begin to laugh as soon as they see me, and ask if you are taking your dose of laugh regularly, and if you've had your full allowance today. Every one has some funny story to send you to "help it on." It's the joke of the season.

JIMMIE. A scream! Why, Laura begins to show a sense of humor almost human. And everybody's catching it!

LAURA. Who'd ever have thought that laughing was contagious? (*Sits lounge.*)

CAREY (*crossing to her, followed by HANSON. HANSON sits lounge, CAREY chair.*) Mercy on us! It's the catchiest thing there is! Mumps and measles can't be listed in the

same chapter! Why, the laughing microbe is the liveliest bug bacteriology knows. Talk about spreading! The pesky little germs are grandfathers in ten minutes, and every blessed one infects an area a mile square. They break out in the form of giggles, even to the third and fourth generation. Nothing like it! Keep it up tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, and when you once really get the habit worked into your bones, you never can break it, but will have "the laugh that won't rub off!"

JIMMIE (*walks down front, GAY walking to KITTY at C. Speaks dramatically*).

Does your life seem but a bubble?

Laugh it off!

Is it stuffed with toil and trouble?

Laugh it off!

Is your liver on a spree?

Would your stomach like to be?

Take this little tip from me—

Laugh it off!

CAREY. Right you are, my boy! There is no trouble of brain or body, that a good, hearty laugh, if persistently taken, according to directions, will not cure. Why, don't you know, laughter is the life-elixir of the gods? These divine beings live on it, feast on it, and bathe in it, bestowing the overflow in mystic showers of joy upon mortals like you and me, to keep us alive and—sane!

GAY. And Laura is a different woman already!

LAURA (*innocently*). Why, no, I'm still Laura Hanson. It's not me that's different. It's the rest of the world. I didn't like the looks of it this morning, but it looks good to me now!

CAREY (*rising to shake hands with her*). Glory be! healed in a day!

LAURA (*still puzzled*). You all seem different to me, somehow!

HANSON. Of course! We've all been treated with laughing-gas—the Carey brand!

LAURA (*to CAREY*). You told me this morning I was old

and wrinkled and sour and dried up—and lots of things that weren't nice!

CAREY. That was just a joke! I tell you now that you are young and beautiful and sweet and plump and altogether charming!

LAURA. Is that a joke, too?

CAREY. Perish the thought! That's heaven's own truth. You are glorious!

JIMMIE. Clarke, do you stand for this, right before your eyes?

HANSON (*innocently*). Why, ain't it the truth? (*All laugh.*)

Enter NORAH, R.

NORAH. Sure, mum, an' be yez at home?

LAURA. Don't we seem at home?

HANSON. Very much at home, Norah! Why? (*LAURA and HANSON rise.*)

NORAH. Sure, an' it's that dead woman back again, mum—

JIMMIE. Banquo's ghost! (*Crosses to her.*)

NORAH. And she's brung the doctor wid her! Shall I jist say as yez ain't in, this avenin'?

LAURA. Certainly not! We are in. Bring them in!

NORAH. Sure, mum, if it's yersilf as says so! I wouldn't let her set one of her two fate in, at all, at all!

JIMMIE (*tickles her under chin*). Norah's the girl with the glad hand every time! (*She laughs, and exits, R., laughing at JIMMIE over shoulder.*)

CAREY (*crosses to JIMMIE*). See here, young fellow, have you got a corner on the girl market?

JIMMIE. Nothing doing! Kitty for mine! (*Goes to KITTY, takes her arm, and saunters with her to position at L., behind lounge.*)

CAREY. Thanks awfully. (*Goes to GAY, takes position by fireplace.*)

GAY (*coquettishly*). You and me, both!

Enter NORAH, R., followed by DR. WHITCOMB and MRS. PERRY.

NORAH. Sure, an' yez can be afther a-bringin' yer two silves in, doctor! (*Exit R.*)

MRS. PERRY. Now, Dr. Whitcomb, you can just see for yourself how they are killing the poor soul by slow poison. It's a regular lunatic asylum turned loose.

WHITCOMB (*to CAREY, who turns to face him*). What's this I hear, St. George? Are you murdering my patients before I even get started out of town? Mrs. Perry informs me that—(*looks across, sees LAURA, and stops in surprise.*) Why, Mrs. Hanson, can that be you? (*LAURA walks toward them.*)

CAREY. She's very much alive yet, Uncle, able to sit up and take regular nourishment; so I'll let her speak for herself!

WHITCOMB (*examines her critically*). Well, you've certainly got me beat! You look as young and pretty as one of these girls—blessed if you don't!

CAREY (*to LAURA*). What was I just telling you? Laughing—in big doses—is the best beauty dope on the market. Regularly applied, both internally and externally, I guarantee it to remove every wrinkle from both brow and brain. (*MRS. PERRY sniffs disdainfully.*)

WHITCOMB. How about it, Mrs. Hanson?

LAURA. I never felt so well in my life, Dr. Whitcomb. (*MRS. PERRY gasps.*)

WHITCOMB. What have you done to her, boy?

CAREY. Nary a do! She's done it all herself!

JIMMIE. And you can see how it has re-acted on the whole—ahem!—family!

WHITCOMB. A lightning cure! These modern methods are—

JIMMIE. Speedy! You bet! Come, Kitty! Us for the light fantastic! (*Grasps her for a waltz, and whirls out to C.*)

CAREY (*to GAY*). Come, Lady Gay—it's follow suit or lay down your hand! (*Joins with GAY in waltz.*)

HANSON. We're as young as any of them, eh Laura?

LAURA. Younger! Just one day old! (*They join the waltz.*)

WHITCOMB. Well, I'll be—blessed! (*Looks all around. Grabs MRS. PERRY, who protests vigorously, kicking and pulling, to no avail. He waltzes her with the rest.*) Come, madam, quick! My old feet won't stand for this! (*Music may start in with JIMMIE'S first move, or the men may whistle a waltz air in unison. After a turn or two—*)

Enter NORAH, C.

NORAH. Sure, an' ain't it toime to be afther a-laughin'? (*All stop, and take positions around sides, HANSON and LAURA, front; WHITCOMB and MRS. PERRY, back; CAREY and GAY, L.; JIMMIE and KITTY, R.*)

HANSON (*looks watch*). Just! (*All laugh.*) And we'll be the Laughing Family forever after!

CAREY. That's worth a good one! Surely, laughter is the vibration of angel voices coming down to us over the telephone wires that stretch from heaven to earth. It's the one magnetic line that connects us with eternal joy. Mrs. Perry, get on the line! Take down the receiver, and be human! Aren't you glad to be alive?

MRS. PERRY. Why, I—I—I don't know but I am! (*Smiles, sheepishly.*)

WHITCOMB. Shake on it! (*They shake hands.*)

CAREY. Then laugh, woman, laugh! Watch your years and tears drop off like withered leaves and make up your mind to be somebody. I'd rather be a monkey than a donkey. (*She laughs loudly—all clap hands.*) Good! Good! He who laughs most laughs best. So let's all swell the chorus! One, two, three—ready, go! (*All laugh.*) Now again! (*Laugh.*) Again! (*Continue ad. lib. and hold picture for—*)

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SYNOPSIS.

Act I.—Betty's engagement dance on Christmas night. The portrait of Mrs. Elizabeth Drew. Betty's great-great-grandmother. The story of Mistress Elizabeth's romantic career. Ghosts of the happy pair haunt the room each Christmas night. Rita falls asleep in a chair and dreams a dream.

Act II.—Scene I—The dream of long ago. John Harvey gains an interview with his lady love. The secret mission is made known to Mistress Elizabeth and the marked chart is put into her hands. Shots, pursuit and the secret passage. Scene II—Where is Elizabeth? The mysterious tapping. Elizabeth makes a dramatic entrance and brings astounding news.

Act III.—Rita awakes. Betty's puzzling absence is discussed. Another mysterious tapping. "He's waiting for me—at the end of the secret passage, the same as in the long, long ago!"

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By WALTER BEN HARE.

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Comedy-drama in 2 acts; 15 females. Time, about 2 hours. Scene: A simple interior. Characters: Abbu San, daughter of his majesty. Duchess Fuji-no. Lady Yu-giri, Mist of the Evening. O Matsuka San and O Kiku San, maids of honor. Ohano, wife of the bandit chief. Natsu-no, hostess of the inn "Million Welcomes." Okuku, sister of the Ox, a porter at the inn. Umi, Sada and Yasa, peasant maids. Henrietta Dash, an American newswriter. Aunt Paradise, a black mammy. Madam Masago, manager of the players. Ono, her maid of all work.

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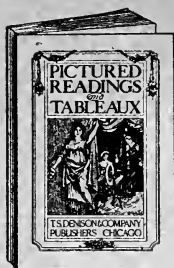
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Her Hero, 20 min.	1	1
Hey, Rubel! 15 min.	1	
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Jumbo Jum, 30 min.	4	3
Little Red School House, 20 m.	4	
Love and Lather, 35 min.	3	2
Marriage and After, 10 min.	1	
Memphis Mose, 25 min.	5	1
Mischievous Nigger, 25 min.	4	2
Mistaken Miss, 20 min.	1	1
Mr. and Mrs. Fido, 20 min.	1	1
Oh, Doctor! 30 min.	6	2
One Sweetheart for Two, 20 m.	2	
Oshkosh Next Week, 20 min.	4	
Oyster Stew, 10 min.	2	
Pete Yansen's Gurl's Moder, 10m.	1	
Pickles for Two, 15 min.	2	
Pooh Bah of Peacetown, 35 min.	2	2
Prof. Black's Funnygraph, 15 m.	6	
Sham Doctor, 10 min.	4	2
Si and I, 15 min.	1	
Special Sale, 15 min.	2	
Stage Struck Ducky, 10 min.	2	1
Sunay Son of Italy, 15 min.	1	
Time Table, 20 min.	1	1
Tramp and the Actress, 20 min.	1	1
Troubled by Ghosts, 10 min.	4	
Troubles of Rozinski, 15 min.	1	
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